

What is claimed is:

1. A mobile communicator that encodes an inputted speech signal, amplifies the encoded speech signal and transmits the amplified encoded speech signal, comprising:
 - an encoder that encodes an inputted speech signal at one of a plurality of different speech encoding rates;
 - a speech encoding rate selector that allows a user of the mobile communicator to select one of said plurality of different encoding rates as an upper limit speech encoding rate; and
 - a speech encoding rate controller that determines a speech encoding rate used by said encoder to encode said inputted speech signal, wherein the determined speech encoding rate is less than or equal to the upper limit speech encoding rate selected by said user.
2. A mobile communicator as set forth in claim 1, further comprising:
 - an encoding rate storage section for storing an encoding rate selected by said user; and
 - an encoding timing controller that controls output of a stored encoding rate from said encoding rate storage section to said speech encoding rate controller in accordance with a timing input of said user.
3. A mobile communicator as set forth in claim 1, further comprising:
 - a battery level monitor that monitors residual power of a battery power supply of said mobile communicator and outputs a signal corresponding to the monitored residual power;
 - wherein said speech encoding rate controller determines said speech encoding rate used by said encoder in accordance with residual power of said battery power supply as indicated by said signal outputted by said battery level monitor.
4. A mobile communicator as set forth in claim 3, further comprising:

a battery level storage section that stores speech encoding rates corresponding to various battery residual power levels;

wherein said battery level monitor selects a speech encoding rate from said battery level storage section in accordance with a monitored residual power of said battery power supply and provides said selected speech encoding rate to said speech encoding rate controller.

5. A mobile communicator as set forth in claim 3, wherein said speech encoding rate controller determines said speech encoding rate used by said encoder in accordance with said encoding rate selected by said user, a speech encoding rate selected by said battery level monitor corresponding to said monitored residual power, a speech encoding rate received in a control signal from a mobile communication network, and a speech encoding rate computed from an inputted speech signal.

6. A method for determining a speech encoding rate of a mobile communicator, comprising the steps of:

receiving a selected speech encoding rate as inputted to said mobile communicator by a user of said mobile communicator as an upper limit speech encoding rate; and

determining a speech encoding rate to be used by a process for encoding a speech signal inputted to said mobile communicator such that the determined speech encoding rate is less than or equal to the received selected speech encoding rate.

7. A method as set forth in claim 6, wherein said step of determining further comprises the steps of:

receiving a speech encoding rate corresponding to residual power of a battery power supply of said mobile communicator;

receiving a speech encoding rate from a control signal from a mobile communication network;

receiving a speech encoding rate computed from an inputted speech signal;

comparing said speech encoding rate from said control signal with said speech encoding rate computed from said inputted speech signal and selecting the lower of said speech encoding rates as a first comparison encoding rate;

comparing said user-selected speech encoding rate with said speech encoding rate corresponding to residual power and selecting the lower of said speech encoding rates as a second comparison encoding rate; and

comparing said first comparison encoding rate with said second comparison encoding rate and selecting the lower of said comparison encoding rates as a speech encoding rate for encoding said inputted speech signal.

8. A method as set forth in claim 6 wherein said step of determining further comprises the steps of:

receiving a timing control signal inputted to said mobile communicator by said user; and

using said selected speech encoding rate to determine a speech encoding rate to be used by a process for encoding a speech signal inputted to said mobile communicator only when said timing control signal has been received.

9. A method for determining a speech encoding rate of a mobile communicator, comprising the steps of:

receiving a speech encoding rate corresponding to residual power of a battery power supply of said mobile communicator;

receiving a speech encoding rate from a control signal from a mobile communication network;

receiving a speech encoding rate computed from an inputted speech signal;

determining whether a selected speech encoding rate has been inputted to said mobile communicator by a user of said mobile communicator as a maximum speech encoding rate;

if a selected speech encoding rate has been inputted by a user, setting the selected inputted encoding rate as a first comparison encoding rate;

if a selected speech encoding rate has not been inputted by a user, setting the speech encoding rate corresponding to residual power as said first comparison encoding rate;

comparing said speech encoding rate from said control signal with said speech encoding rate computed from said inputted speech signal and selecting the lower of said speech encoding rates as a second comparison encoding rate; and

comparing said first comparison encoding rate with said second comparison encoding rate and selecting the lower of said comparison encoding rates as a speech encoding rate for encoding said inputted speech signal.